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SUBJECT: BABIL POLITICAL PARTIES LOBBYING TRIBAL COUNCILS

11. (U) This is a PRT Babil cable.

12. (U) SUMMARY: With mosques and religious entities all but out of play in the upcoming provincial election campaign, several of Babil's competing political parties are courting local tribal councils. Senior representatives from the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) and Sayyid Rassul's (SR) independent Shia-based political entity are pursuing alternatives to promoting their slates through religious leaders and are actively courting Babil's tribal councils. END SUMMARY.

13. (U) Anticipating that the pending provincial election law will ultimately quash the ability of parties to campaign by way of mosques, specifically Friday afternoon sermons, two of Babil's established political entities are wooing the province's tribal councils for campaign support and influence. ISCI and SR, which are competitors, are pursuing parallel paths.

14. (SBU) According to Communist Political Council (PC) member Qusay Nadi ali Hummadi, Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim appointed Sayyid Shihab al-Yassiri to serve as the ISCI regional coordinator. IN this role, Sayyid Shihab not only represents the al-Hakims in Babil, he is also charged with composing all of the province's ISCI slates for the upcoming elections. [Note: PRT Staff has learned that ISCI may run as many as seven slates comprised of ISCI members and "independents." In order to qualify for the lists, everyone must verify their religious piety and affiliation with ISCI, including the so-called "independents." End note.] Sayyid Shihab in turn designated Abddullah al-Zubaidi, a Babil teacher, to form the province's main ISCI slate, while Shihab focuses on garnering support from the community, according to Qusay.

15. (SBU) Babil PC member Ahmad Hashim al-Amidi told PRT staff that SR has his own provincial party coordinator, Hussayn Rashid. [Note: Ahmad al-Amidi is a current PC member, the former PC Chairman and a former SR party member. In 2005 SR's party secured seven PC seats, including Ahmad's. Sistani removed Sayyid Rassul as his personal representative in Babil several months after the 2005 elections, reportedly because Rassul was using his political party for personal gain. End note.] Hussayn Rashid is not well known in the province, but he is the brother of Khazal Rashid, the former SR-slate PC member who organized a sit-in protest at the PC in late 2007 in an effort to unseat five members who did not meet minimal educational requirements for membership on the council, including Babil Governor Salam Salih Mahdi al-Muslimawi. Unlike Sayyid Shihab, Hussayn focuses primarily on the tribal councils in the southern part of Babil from the City of Hillah south to Kifl and as far east as Hashimiyah.

16. (U) According to both PC members, the two parties' coordinators have the same modus operandi. They attend gatherings at the tribe's respective receiving halls [al-Mudif], where they offer moral support to the tribesmen in addition to distributing gifts, money, and cars on behalf of their respective parties. Sayyid Shihab is even known to involve himself in inter and intra-tribal disputes. He attends the tribal hearings and upon the judges' decrees steps in and assumes the fine on behalf of the defendant, noting that he is

paying the fine on behalf of the defendant as a gesture from the al-Hakim family. A Hillah contractor recently told PRT staff that he was involved in a physical altercation which was settled at a tribal council on June 1. Before he could pay the judgment, Sayyid Shihab, unknown to the contractor at the time, stood up and said, "I'm talking on behalf of Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, and I'm here to pay any fines associated with this claim."

HILLAS